

**Arizona Strip Draft Plan/Draft EIS
READER'S GUIDE
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument
Vermilion Cliffs National Monument
Arizona Strip Field Office**

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) covering management plans for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Arizona Strip Field Office (Arizona Strip FO), Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Parashant, BLM and NPS), and Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (Vermilion) was released for public review and comment on November 25, 2005. **In order for comments to be fully considered in the Final EIS, they must be postmarked by March 17, 2006.**

The DEIS can be found at www.blm.gov.az or at www.nps.gov/para. CDs are available that contain the DEIS as well as the Route Evaluation Maps and Reports. Printed copies of the Route Evaluation Maps can be viewed at the Arizona Strip District offices at 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah or at the public open houses.

This is a draft, so nothing in the plans are final decisions at this point. The Final EIS should be available to the public next Fall. Under BLM planning processes, there is a 30-day protest period to protest any of the BLM land use planning decisions in the document. BLM implementation decisions in the EIS may be appealed under various authorities. Under NPS planning processes, there is a 30-day No Action period prior to signing the NPS Record of Decision for the NPS lands within the Parashant. Following resolution of BLM protests, three Records of Decision (RODs) would be signed for the three planning areas: one each for Vermilion and Arizona Strip FO and one for BLM lands within the Parashant. The final products of the planning effort would be three separate Management Plans/Implementation Plans for each of the planning areas: Parashant, Vermilion, and Arizona Strip FO.

We need to hear from the public regarding the potential decisions and information in the Arizona Strip Draft Plan/DEIS. Specific comments are best. Some things to consider when reviewing the DEIS are:

- Does the Preferred Alternative provide for the uses and activities you consider important on the Arizona Strip? If not, why?
- Does the Preferred Alternative adequately protect the values, resources or conditions you consider important on the Arizona Strip? If not, why?
- Do the potential routes in the Preferred Alternative allow you to continue the uses and activities you consider important? If not, why? Refer to specific routes, if possible.
- Do the potential routes in the Preferred Alternative protect the values, resources or conditions you consider important on the Arizona Strip? If not, why? Refer to specific routes, if possible.
- Are there any flaws in the analysis? If so, what specifically?
- Is there new information that would have a bearing on the analysis? If so, what?
- Do we need to clarify any of the potential decisions? If so, which?
- Is there anything we missed that should be in the DEIS? If so, what?

The Arizona Strip Planning Team is willing to meet with groups, individuals or members of the media to go over the key points in the DEIS (call Planning Lead Diana Hawks, (435) 688-3266).

The summary below was developed to assist in understanding this long and complicated document. It highlights some of the main points in the plan, but is not meant to be a summary of everything in the DEIS.

Background

- The **Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument** was established by Presidential Proclamation on January 11, 2000. The Parashant is cooperatively managed by the BLM Arizona Strip District and the National Park Service, Lake Mead National Recreation Area. It includes 1,048,293 acres of which 808,724 are administered by the BLM and 208,444 are administered by the NPS. The Parashant is in Mohave County, Arizona north of the Grand Canyon.
- The **Vermilion Cliffs National Monument** was established by Presidential Proclamation on November 9, 2000. The Vermilion covers 293,679 acres in Coconino County, Arizona, and is administered solely by the BLM.
- The remainder of the BLM-administered lands on the Arizona Strip are managed under the **Arizona Strip Field Office**, which encompasses approximately 1.7 million acres in Mohave and Coconino counties, Arizona.
- Three separate management plans – one each for the two national monuments and one for the Arizona Strip Field Office – are covered under the single draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) released Nov. 25, 2005.

Limits (Sideboards) of this DEIS

Laws

The decisions in this DEIS must be within applicable Federal law and consistent with state law. See Appendix 1.D for relevant laws, executive orders, and memorandums.

Proclamations

The Proclamations designating both Parashant and Vermilion directed that the Monument objects for which these areas were set aside would be protected. See Appendix 1.A and 1.B for these Proclamations. Purpose, Significance, and Mission statements based on the Proclamations for both Monuments can be found in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Policy

The DEIS must conform to current BLM and NPS policy.

Alternative Summary

The DEIS analyzes a range of management alternatives and identifies a preferred alternative. The approaches for each alternative are explained beginning on page 2-8. Very briefly:

- **Alternative A** is the No Action Alternative, which means management as it currently exists. It provides a baseline for comparison.
- **Alternative B** places an emphasis on minimal human use and influence, and proposes the fewest miles of open roads and trails.
- **Alternative C** represents an attempt to balance resource protection and human use and influence.
- **Alternative D** places an emphasis on maximum appropriate human use and influence, and the widest array of visitor experiences and opportunities, including the most miles of open roads and trails of Alternatives B-E.
- **Alternative E** is the **Preferred Alternative**. This alternative includes elements of each alternative above. It emphasizes minimal human use and influence in the more remote areas of the Arizona Strip, and more human use and influence in the areas adjacent to local communities or in areas presently receiving such use and influence.

Through the preferred alternative, BLM and NPS are striving to protect the remoteness of the Arizona Strip and its Monuments, protect Monument objects, and also meet the needs of its communities.

DEIS Layout

- The **Executive Summary** gives an overview of key points. It is a brief summary of purpose and need, issues, alternatives, as well as tables with percentages, miles, and acres for the top issues covered in the DEIS: Access and Wilderness. The Executive Summary also contains a table listing all the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) by alternative.
- **Chapter 1, Introduction**, gives a general introduction, including planning area vision. It also contains more information about the Planning Area, Planning Guidance, and Planning Process. The purpose, significance, and mission statements are drawn from the Proclamations for both Monuments and from the Federal Land Policy and Management Act for the Arizona Strip Field Office. This is an NPS planning requirement that will help guide management of these areas into the future. Planning Criteria, a BLM planning requirement, are introduced in Chapter 1 and fully listed in Appendix 1.E.
- **Chapter 2, Alternatives**, provides a detailed table of the alternatives, followed by associated maps arranged by alternative. **This is the most important section of the DEIS to review** and provide comments. It contains the potential decisions, designations, and/or allocations that would be made if the agency's Preferred Alternative is selected in the Final EIS.

- **Chapter 3, Affected Environment**, provides a detailed account of the Arizona Strip planning area and management as they currently exist. This chapter contains background information on the resources, areas, and uses that could be affected by the decisions made in Chapter 2.
- **Chapter 4, Environmental Impacts**, analyzes the environmental impacts of each alternative on resources, resource uses, special area designations, and social and economic conditions. This chapter discusses the impacts of the decisions made in Chapter 2 on the resources, areas, or uses of the Planning Area.
- **Chapter 5** details the consultation and coordination for the plan.
- The **Appendices** are organized at the end of the document by chapter. They provide a great deal of background and supplemental information helpful in understanding the plan as well as conservation measures for threatened and endangered species and stipulations for oil and gas leasing.

Key Items in the Preferred Alternative:

Access

- Both Monuments and part of the Arizona Strip Field Office underwent an extensive route evaluation process that identified which routes (roads and trails) are recommended to remain open and which would be closed. NPS routes within the Parashant have already been designated as part of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) 1986 General Management Plan (GMP), but discrepancies between the 1979 wilderness proposal and the 1986 BMP have been addressed in this plan.
- This route evaluation provides a consistent, reliable, open, and well-documented process for making route determinations. A thorough, route-by-route, alternative-by-alternative documentation of the route evaluation is included with the CD version of the DEIS for public review.
- Routes were recommended to be closed or limited in most cases to protect natural or cultural resources, sensitive species habitat, or to reduce route redundancy. The amount of routes open, limited and closed varies by alternative.
- In the preferred alternative, 1,397 miles of routes would remain open in the Parashant, 185 miles would be administrative use only, and 191 miles would be closed. In Vermilion, 384 miles would be open, 66 miles are administrative use only, and 102 miles are closed. Of the nearly 1,000 miles of routes inventoried on the Arizona Strip Field Office, up to about 100 miles could be closed.

- Throughout the Arizona Strip, vehicles must stay on designated routes. The preferred alternative designates 7,000 acres within the Arizona Strip Field Office as OHV “open” areas, in which vehicles may travel off-route. No alternative recommends designating open areas in either National Monument.

Wilderness

Eight wilderness areas on the Arizona Strip were designated by Congress in 1984. See the sections of the Arizona Strip DEIS beginning on pages 2-201 and 3-165 for more information on existing wilderness areas. See Table 3.35 on page 3-166 for the specific wilderness areas.

Seven proposed wilderness areas are within the NPS portion of the Parashant. They were recommended to Congress in the 1979 Lake Mead National Recreation Area Wilderness Proposal. See Table 3.35 on page 3-166 for the specific areas.

Nothing in the Arizona Strip DEIS changes the Congressional designation on BLM lands or the Proposed Wilderness recommendations to Congress on NPS lands. No Wilderness Study Areas are proposed in this DEIS.

- No new wilderness areas are recommended in any alternative. The amount of NLM designated or NPS proposed wilderness does not change: There are currently 265,868 acres of BLM Designated Wilderness, and 188,121 acres of NPS Proposed Wilderness on the Arizona Strip.
- No wilderness study areas (WSAs) currently exist on the Arizona Strip and none are recommended in any alternative.
- Nearly 281,000 additional acres in the preferred alternative are identified to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. These are areas in which BLM and NPS would maintain wilderness characteristics (naturalness, solitude, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation) where they currently exist. These areas vary by alternative. This is not a special designation such as a wilderness study area.
- In the Preferred Alternative, no existing roads were closed in order to allocate lands managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

- The Preferred Alternative adds five new Areas of Critical Environmental Concern to the nine already existing in the Arizona Strip FO. This would bring the total acres of ACECs to 158,398 in the Arizona Strip FO.
- The existing ACECs in the Parashant would be revoked because the monument designation provides additional protection of resources beyond ACEC designation. There are no existing ACECs in the Vermilion.

- ACECs are areas where special management attention is required to protect a particular resource or process, such as sensitive plant or wildlife habitat, cultural sites, etc.

Lands/Realty

- In the Monuments, all federal lands would be retained in federal ownership. In the Arizona Strip Field Office, up to 25,319 acres of BLM public land would be available for exchange or sale (BLM plans typically identify such lands).

Mineral/Oil and Gas Development

- In the Monuments, mining and oil and gas development would not occur because the lands have been withdrawn from mineral development.
- In the Arizona Strip FO, the majority of acres would be open to mineral material sales (subject to stipulations and restrictions), but 245,822 acres would be closed to mineral development. The majority of the Arizona Strip FO would be open to fluid mineral leasing (oil and gas), under some restrictions and stipulations.

Grazing

- Grazing would continue throughout the majority of the Arizona Strip, including both National Monuments and BLM and NPS lands.
- Under the Preferred Alternative, three grazing allotments in the Parashant would be managed as Forage Reserves, in which BLM holds the grazing permit and allows permittees from other allotments to graze when there is a special need, such as resting grazing on a permittee's allotment following a fire. One forage reserve currently exists on the Parashant, two more are recommended in the Preferred Alternative.
- One pasture in the Paria Canyon near Lees Ferry would be closed to grazing to reduce conflicts with recreationists.

Recreation

Among the recreation decisions are different types of recreation management areas that vary in the intensity of their management. In general, the preferred alternative emphasizes remote, primitive opportunities in the more isolated, rugged areas of the Arizona Strip, while providing more accessible recreation opportunities closer to communities.

- “**Extensive Recreation Management Areas**” (ERMAs) receive less-intensive recreation management – basically custodial management for visitor health and safety, user conflicts, or resource protection issues. ERMAs are all the areas not identified as SRMAs. ERMAs are favored in the Alternative B, which emphasizes minimal human use and influence.
- “**Special Recreation Management Areas**” (SRMAs) are identified to direct recreation funding and personnel for specific recreation opportunities. Each SRMA would target a distinct, primary recreation-tourism market and be managed accordingly. These areas are described in detail in Appendix 2-R, and range from providing remote, challenging, self-directed recreation to close-to-town sustainable motorized access.

- **“Recreation Management Zones” (RMZs)** are sub-units within SRMAs managed for distinctly different types of recreation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Arizona BLM Legislative EIS of 1994 recommended the following Wild and Scenic River segments on the Virgin and Paria rivers in the Planning Area. See page 2-205 of the DEIS for more information. Nothing in this DEIS changes these recommendations to Congress.

Paria River

The entire 27-mile length of the Paria River in Arizona is recommended wild.

Virgin River

The section of the Virgin River from the Utah state line to the first I-15 bridge is recommended wild. That section of the river from the first I-15 bridge to the Virgin River Campground is recommended scenic and the remainder of the river from the campground to the Nevada state line is recommended recreational.

Executive Summary Supplemental Information:

Travel Management Areas (TMA)

The categories of TMAs are explained on the table in the DEIS beginning on page 2-183. The four TMA categories range from Primitive, which includes large areas with no routes and areas with low densities of tertiary (primitive) roads, to Rural, which provides for the widest variety of motorized and non-motorized access.

Map 2.42 shows the recommended boundaries for TMAs in the preferred alternative.

Comparing the differences among alternatives provides some insight into the approach of each alternative.

OHV Area Designations

Throughout the Arizona Strip, all BLM designated wilderness areas and NPS proposed wilderness areas are *closed* to motorized and mechanized vehicle use, with the exception of authorized routes previously identified within these areas.

In the Monuments outside of the wilderness areas mentioned above, vehicles are *limited* to designated routes (no “off-road” or “off-route” vehicular travel).

In the Arizona Strip FO lands, you’ll see the terms *limited to designated routes* and *limit to existing routes*. In these areas vehicles need to stay on routes. Because the routes in the Arizona Strip FO have not yet been evaluated or designated, they are “existing routes” at this point in time. “Designated routes” have gone through the evaluation process, “existing routes” is simply the inventory of routes that currently exist. The routes in the Arizona Strip FO will undergo route evaluation and designation within 3-5 years after the RODs are signed for the Plan.

A small percentage of the Arizona Strip FO is recommended to be *open*, which means vehicles would not have to stay on routes and could travel cross-country. The Preferred Alternative designates some new areas as open in the Arizona Strip FO.

Route Designations – This is the part that states which specific routes are open or closed. More detail – including additional categories – is provided in the table beginning on page 2-193 in the main part of the plan.

The categories are defined at the top of the table on 2-193. Most are self-explanatory. “MO” are routes that are open to the public, but with mitigating measures.

Wilderness

BLM has lands that were designated as Wilderness in the 1984 Arizona Wilderness Protection Act. NPS lands within the Parashant were identified as Proposed Wilderness as part of the Lake Mead NRA 1979 Wilderness Proposal. Proposed Wilderness is managed the same as designated wilderness and is termed ‘proposed’ because Congress has not yet acted on any wilderness designations in this area. Both of these are areas that existed before these plans.

New in these plans are “Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics.” These are not new wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas proposed for wilderness.

Table 2.10, which begins on page 2-112, shows what some of the management actions would be to maintain the wilderness characteristics.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Table 14 in the Executive Summary shows what already exists (Alternative A), and what is proposed under the various alternatives. Appendix 2.K explains what values each ACEC aims to protect.